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communities rulings on agricultural technique and the organization of agricultural labour appear in the guise of magic devices and rituals, there is none of this in Nupe agriculture, which remains matter-of-fact and consciously based on empirical knowledge.[1]

In a productive organization of this kind special emphasis must be laid on the position of authority of the old and experienced farmer. It can be studied in action whenever groups comprising both older and younger men co-operate in farm-work. In family work as well as in non-family co-operation the older men always lead the work or supervise the work of the younger men; they point out mistakes to them and teach them the important rules of farm-work. I have frequently seen men scold boys for damaging a plant when weeding, or for planting seeds too close. Boys are made to work on the farms from the age of 6 or 7, first with toy-like light tools, later with the real heavy hoe, in order to learn through practice and under constant supervision. In Nupe farming very little is left to chance. I have, for example, never heard of anyone starting farm-work too early or too late in the season and thus wasting the seeds—a mistake not uncommon among more primitive agriculturalists. The quasi-scientific aspect of Nupe agriculture is made most evident in the 'theoretical' rulings which the people themselves are always ready to lay down. Thus informants formulated the following rule: there exist two kinds of rice, one taking 90 days, the other 180 days to mature; or this: the latest date for the planting of ground-nuts is the beginning of the third month (counted from the beginning of the planting season). Not all such rules are fully convincing to the European agriculturist—we remember the rule about planting yams before the dry season in order to make them grow bigger. But, on the other hand, there is plenty of evidence to show that the existing body of native farm-knowledge admits of experiment, and is constantly assimilating newly gained experiences. There is, for example, the new 'rule' about cotton and red pepper being excellent first crops before millet and sorghum. Experiment has besides been forced upon the native cultivator by the introduction of modern crops or varieties. Thus the people have tried with varying success to grow cotton on different kinds of soil; cotton-growing has also caused new difficulties with regard to the distribution of agricultural work, which can be solved ultimately only by experiment.[2]

Long experimenting, however, which does not lead to the incorporation of the new experiences into that solid body of farming-knowledge

[1] The one exception is the magic linked with the cultivation of kola-nut trees, which itself represents an exceptional form of cultivation. Apart from this magic there exist only the annual fertility cults which set the spiritual framework for farming activities in general, and certain varying, unsystematic forms of magic—charms applied to hoes, or a specific magic performed over a field—which are to ensure success in individual cases.

[2] In 1936 the Agricultural Officer of Bida Division travelled round the district to instruct personally the cotton-growers in the more important centres about the proper date for planting cotton—information which, coming many years after cotton-growing had been introduced in this area, only confirmed a point of technique which the people had already discovered for themselves.

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The co-operative organization of efaké work also enables the group to



train its adolescents and to bring them gradually into the system of co-operation. Young boys are employed first in easy auxiliary work, such as working the bellows in blacksmith and glass-work, or the spooling of cotton thread in weaving; sitting all day long in the workshop they learn a good deal from watching; when they are old enough they are given more serious work, which they carry out under the guidance and tuition of the *efakó* head till, eventually, they become fully fledged members of the labour-unit. In most cases the *efakó* work is supplemented by special individual, *bucá*, work. The relation between the two varies widely, with the specific nature of the craft and its productive technique.

## BLACKSMITH WORK

The blacksmiths are called *tswata* in Nupe, or sometimes *tswata gbagba*, 'heavy smiths', to distinguish them from the *tswata muku*, the brass- and silversmiths. Nearly every village in Nupe possesses at least one or two blacksmith workshops. In Bida we find three groups of blacksmiths, whole blacksmith 'wards' in fact, each with its cluster of workshops, and each situated in a different *ekpă* of the town. According to tradition the three blacksmith groups are of different origin. One, in the old centre of Bida, *ba nîn*, claims descent from the original group of blacksmiths which was established in Bida when it was still a Beni village. At that time the head of this group, the *Majĭ Tswata*, the Master of the Blacksmiths, is said to have held authority over all the blacksmiths of Beni country. The blacksmiths living in the *Etsu* Masaba quarter, the smallest of the three groups, came to Bida comparatively late, from Trans-Kaduna. The largest blacksmith group in Bida, in the *Etsu* Umaru quarter, traces its descent to the blacksmiths of Rabá, the former capital of the kingdom. They came to Bida together with the king and court when Bida became the new capital of Fulani Nupe. As we shall see later, this last group has established itself as the supreme guild authority over the blacksmiths of Bida and all Nupe. The craftsmen of this group call themselves *dokodzaži*, after their head, who bears the title *Dokodza*.[1]

### *Technology*

The blacksmith wards of Bida are of very different size; the smallest contains two workshops, the largest seven. In some cases the entrance-hall of the compound in which the families of the craftsmen are living serves also as workshop or forge. But usually the forge is in a separate hut which stands by itself a small distance from the compound; with its three or four wide doors, and the many small window-holes let into the wall to serve as passage for the smoke from the forge, the workshops can be easily identified. Inside are two furnaces, each screened in by an angular mud wall, about 3 feet high. On the inner side of the screen, facing the open fire, sits the blacksmith himself; on the other side of the

[1] It is interesting to note that the modern Emirate of Patigi, where the descendants of the old Nupe dynasty are reigning to-day, also possesses its group of 'royal blacksmiths', under another *Dokodza*. They came to Patigi together with the family of the present rulers, from Gbara, the ancient residence of this branch of the Nupe dynasty.

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# CHAPTER XV

## INDUSTRIES (*continued*)

### INDIVIDUAL CRAFTS

463 467 THE guild-organized crafts represent, as we have seen, a specific social group or class—the class of skilled artisans—which only occasionally enlarges its membership by adopting individuals from other professional or social groups. The individual crafts, on the other hand, present a vaguely defined and ever fluid group which recruits itself from every stratum of Nupe society, the peasant class as well as the 'intelligentsia', slaves and clients as well as members of the nobility. We shall see presently that men of the titled classes who have lost their former sources of income frequently adopt an individual craft as a new means of livelihood. The technical conditions which contribute to make the guild-organized crafts into 'closed groups', organized on the lines of more or less intensive co-operation, are absent in the industries which are carried out as 'free professions'. Tailors, straw-hat makers, or mat-weavers need no workshops; they can work anywhere, in any part of the house, in sleeping-huts as well as in a corner of the *katamba*. Some craftsmen even wander from place to place and practise their work wherever there is a prospect of trade. Many Bida tailors, for example, have made a practice of visiting neighbouring villages on the market days or at the time of the annual ceremonies and festivals, when they can be sure of finding plenty of work. Nor does their work involve co-operation, or necessitate the use of expensive tools. Mat-weavers work with their hands, straw-hat makers use a block of clay or wood (called *ekugi*) over which they shape the crown of the head, a tool which they can easily make themselves. Tailors, embroiderers, or leather-workers need, in addition to the material, only needle and thread.

463 Although there exist, specially in Bida, experts in these crafts who practise them as their only profession, the technique itself is simple enough to be learned by anyone in a very short time. We remember the farmers who carry out a handicraft as *bucá* work in their spare time. People in the town similarly practise these handicrafts as leisure-time occupations, in addition to other work, or as a lucrative pastime. Many learned men and students of the Koran do a little tailoring beside. Embroidery, a more delicate work, involving taste and a certain skill, has become the pastime occupation of many members of the 'intelligentsia'. Of hat-making, on the other hand, the Nupe say that it is the ideal occupation for 'lazy people', who can do nothing else, meaning particularly those impoverished 'people of quality' who are neither skilled nor resourceful enough to find other means of livelihood.

463 868 The varied demands of the Nupe markets have also called into being various other, minor, handicrafts, some of which are so easy that young boys of 10 or 11 are encouraged to take them up as a first *bucá* occupa-

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tion, for their pocket-money. For example, a father would give his boy 2*d.* to buy cotton-thread which the boy would then plait into trouser strings and sell for 3*d.*; or boys work thin strips of leather into the lacquered amulet strings which the Nupe wear round the neck, making again a profit of 1*d.*

A few examples may illustrate the economic scope of these handicrafts. Straw hats are made of narrow strips of plaited grass, sewn together in spirals. The making of a good straw hat takes from three to four days if the hat-maker buys the plaited strips of straw ready-made, and five days if he plaits them himself. A plain hat is sold for 4*d.* to 6*d.*, the material costing between 1*d.* and 2*d.* A more expensive type of hat, in which part of the crown is covered with leather-work, is the product of two craftsmen, straw-hat maker and leather-worker. A hat of this kind sells for 1*s.* The Bida tailors produce a variety of goods: caps both plain (machine-made) and embroidered; gowns, trousers, saddle-cloths. A plain white cap is sold for 4*d.*, the cost of the material being 2*d.*; a tailor can produce four such caps a day. The embroidered caps are sold for 1*s.*, the material costing 6*d.*; one cap is made in three days. Plain white gowns, also machine-made, are sold for 7*s.* 6*d.*, the cost of the material being 5*s.*; it takes one or two days to make. A simple saddle-cloth takes from three to five days to make; the cost of the material is 6*d.*, and it is sold for 1*s.* or 1*s.* 6*d.* A more elaborate cloth, embroidered and dyed in various colours, takes twenty days to make; the cost of the material is 3*s.*, and it is sold for 10*s.* An embroidered gown is made in fifteen to twenty days. Embroidered Bida gowns are famous all over Nigeria; they are sold for £3 to £5 in Bida, and for much more in the north. The cost of the gown itself (which is made by the ordinary tailor) and of the material used in the embroidery comes to between 15*s.* and 30*s.*; the profit of the craftsman is thus between £2 and £3. But then, he may not be able to sell a gown of this kind, or receive an order for an embroidered gown, oftener than once a year.

We have already mentioned that certain villages, e.g. Kutigi, are famous for their mat industry. Every man and boy in Kutigi works mats in his spare time—and spare time here means just as much the leisure season of the year as every hour that can be spared from farm-work. When sitting in front of their houses in the evenings, even when walking home from the farms, the people are working: they carry a supply of dried grass dyed in different colours, in a kind of quiver under the arm and, while they walk or talk, their fingers are busy plaiting the grass into long, narrow strips. The strips are 3 or 4 inches wide, and up to 15 yards long. The Nupe make oval mats, in which the long strips are sewn together in a multicoloured spiral pattern; or square mats, in which the strips, cut to the same length, are sewn together edge to edge, again in a multicoloured design. The Nupe also make square mats of split sorghum and maize stalks, often dyed in red, yellow, and black, which are harder of texture and have a glossy surface. The oval mats take from five to seven days to make; the cost of the material—grass brought from the river swamps (see p. 200)—and the dye is 5*d.*; the mat is sold in Kutigi for 9*d.* or 10*d.*, and in Bida, after it has passed through

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pays a small amount of money at regular intervals; the fund is administered by the guild-head; he deducts from it money for possible common expenses, and pays out the rest in full to every member of the guild section in turn, after every pay-day. This financial arrangement is fairly common in Nupe, specially among traders and labourers, and we shall discuss it in more detail later. The barbers, however, are the only professional group which has embodied it in its professional organization and utilizes it as a system of mutual financial assistance vested in the craft-guild.

The guild organization is restricted to Bida town. In the villages, even in the larger places, one or two barbers are sufficient to meet the normal demand. Besides, the medicine-man of the pagan districts would constitute a serious competition to the Bida doctors. But so far as barbers and barber-doctors are wanted in the country, the organization in the capital supplies them, either permanently or temporarily. Certain Bida barbers, for example, have settled in villages; others tour the country regularly, stopping in this or that place for longer or shorter periods. Even in these tours of the country districts round Bida, the barbers keep to the territory of 'their' royal house, i.e. the royal house on whose land in Bida their home stands. Although it clearly cannot be said of the barber-doctors that they 'serve the state' in the same way as blacksmiths or leather-workers, this arrangement is a striking evidence of the fact that their association with the political structure of the country is as strongly marked, and that they, again, are in certain respects the 'king's craftsmen'.

## DRUMMERS AND DANCERS

The drummers in Bida, true to the more 'advanced' urban conception of art, are individualists; in the village, where the art of drumming belongs not only to the recreational side of social life, but also forms part of the organization of ritual and ceremony as well as production (we remember the part drumming plays in the farming *egbe*), it is less an 'art' in the modern sense of the word than a 'craft', working for well-defined institutionalized demands, and charged with responsibilities of a graver order. Drumming in the village thus moves in the framework of a close organization on guild lines. In every larger Nupe village we find a special group of drummers and musicians who, though belonging to different families and houses, yet recognize the authority of a common head, the *Etsu Dzã*, the King of the Drummers. Certain other, subordinate titles, are distributed, in guild fashion, among the other members of the craft. The art of drumming remains in the family and is handed on from father to son. You may see small boys practising drumming on little toy-like instruments under the eye of the father. They will go with him wherever he is called to perform, watching him and, when they are sufficiently advanced, accompanying him on their own drums. Sometimes boys from other families desire to become drummers. Their father will then get in touch with the head of the drummers, and give him his son as apprentice. The young apprentice will visit the drummer's house every day for his lesson. In the beginning

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462 441 snuff and smoking, its modern counterpart, cigarettes, and kola-nuts, although they are used mostly by men. To the second category belong the various products of Nupe fashion industry, rings, bracelets, chains, ladles, glass-ware, beads, and also the low carved stools, made by the carpenters, on which the Nupe women are wont to sit. The products of women's crafts are traded by women, irrespective of their use: thus the women sell cloth woven by women (used chiefly for women's dresses), indigo dye (which may be used by and for the men), native soap and pots, including the pitchers which the men use for ablutions. All goods produced by men and used by men are marketed by male traders: hoes, axes, arms, gowns, straw hats, books, leather-work, &c. Goods used by both sexes are traded by both men and women: for example, mats, and certain kinds of cloth of native or European make. Live stock is always marketed by men, only chickens are sometimes sold on the market by women.

462 441 868 Throughout this description the term 'woman' means married women as well as girls, mothers and wives as well as daughters. Small girls of 6 or 8 will already 'keep shop' in play, sitting behind a basket in which they have arranged a few pebbles, little rags of cloth or cigarette tins filled with sand, and silently display their 'goods', as they have seen their mothers and elder sisters do. Mothers always take their young girls to the market, letting them sit beside them and, if they are big enough, carry some of the loads on the way there and back. Girls of 12 or 13 will assist their mothers or deputize for them when they are called away; or they will take some of the cooked food which the women sell, and walk through the market and adjoining streets, crying out the wares, while the mother remains sitting behind her basket. This is, incidentally, an interesting division of labour between mother and daughter, and old and young trader in general. For it is against the dignity of grown-up [576] women to cry out their wares—only young girls may do that. A girl of 14 or 16 is already fully initiated into the secrets of commerce, and will soon start to trade on her own, with a capital of a few pennies or a small store of grain or ground-nuts given her by her mother. By degrees the capital and the scope of her business will grow. I remember a court case in Bida in which two girls, between 14 and 15 years of age, had been summoned because they had fought on the market. The fight was about a piece of cloth which one girl had taken from the other, agreeing to buy it for a certain amount; but later she declared it to be too dear, and paid only half the agreed price. The price of the cloth was 6*d.*, and the people in the court were very amused about this commercial transaction in (as the *Alkali* put it) 'little girl's rags'. However, 'little girl's rags' become real cloth, and even more valuable goods, in the course of time, and when the girl marries she is a fully fledged trader, and fully versed in the art of marketing which will be one of her duties as a married woman. Her [428 562] earnings remain her own property and cannot during her lifetime be touched by her husband. Only when she dies will the husband be entitled to inherit her property.

593 562 This brings us to the question of the economic inequality of husband and wife. It is implied in this division of labour between the sexes which